

How good are you at the moment?

Do you know the type of coursework you have to write?
Yes: I have been given coursework guidelines and I understand them.
No: the tutor has either not yet given detailed guidelines or I am still unclear what I am being asked to do.


Is the purpose of this coursework clear?
Yes: it is relevant to the course, I understand the tutor’s expectations and I know how I will be marked.
No: I do not really know what the tutor is expecting. Look up the module descriptor on OASIS to check the topics that the coursework should cover. Check you understand all the instruction and content words of the question.

Are you clear who you are writing this for? (Have you identified your audience?)
Yes: it is a formal piece of writing in formal, impersonal academic style for the tutor.
No: it is not the usual essay or report for the tutor so does not need to be in formal, impersonal academic style. Ask your tutor what style is appropriate for the audience that has been outlined in the task, or research this yourself.

Will you find the content from research or your own opinions?
Yes: both - I will use the library and internet to find evidence to back up my arguments.
No: I will use my lecture notes as they contain the evidence from the original sources. It is important to do your own additional research for your coursework and prove that you are reading widely.

Do you understand how the work will be marked?
Yes: the assessment criteria were issued with the guidelines.
No: I do not think this is important. Take time to look at the assessment criteria to discover what is expected of an A grade as opposed to a C, or a marginal fail.

Are you confident about your own goals in carrying out this coursework?
Yes: I know what I have to do to pass. I also want to use this to help improve my knowledge of the subject.
No: I just do what I think is right at the time. Think about your personal development and how this coursework can help you develop your knowledge and understanding of the subjects you are studying.





The main points

- Read the coursework instructions carefully as soon as they are issued so that you can plan your time effectively.
- Make sure you understand what you are being asked to do by breaking down the question into its main parts.
- Ask the tutor about anything you do not understand in the question or the accompanying instructions.
- Think about who you are writing this for and what else you are being asked to do.
- Use the assessment criteria to think about what your tutor hopes to see in your work.
- Brainstorm or make patterned notes to record what you know and what you will need to read up on.
- Organise yourself so that you can start reading (making sure that you note down all sources in the appropriate referencing style) when taking notes and writing.

Student Academic Support

Find us on level 2 of the library.
Appointments available or drop by for quick questions Mondays to Fridays, 10am to 4pm.
Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Blackboard.
<http://www.abertay.ac.uk/studying/support/academic>

How did you do?



If most of your answers are ‘**yes**’ then you have a good approach to making the best start to writing coursework. You might still find this handout useful for other tips about research, planning and writing that may be further help to you.

If you answered mostly ‘**no**’ to the questions then this handout will give you an insight into some of the issues you will face getting started with coursework and also managing your workload.



Want more?
Other guides available on Blackboard from Student Academic Support that you might find useful:

- Writing essays
- Writing reports.
- Effective research.
- Referencing and avoiding plagiarism.

Online:

- LearnHigher** is a great starting point, full of excellent resources to develop all aspects of your approach to learning - including printable timetables, coursework planners, and more.
<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/students.htm>
- Study Guides And Strategies:** A short introduction with more useful links to help you develop your writing skills.
<http://www.studygs.net/writing/>
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:** an excellent and thorough guide to understanding assignments.
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/readassign.html>
- MIT Online Writing and Communication Centre:** a short guide to the start of the writing process.
<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc>
- Using English for Academic Purposes:** An excellent guide to answering the set question. Also includes an interactive exercise.
<http://www.uefap.com/writing/question/question.htm>

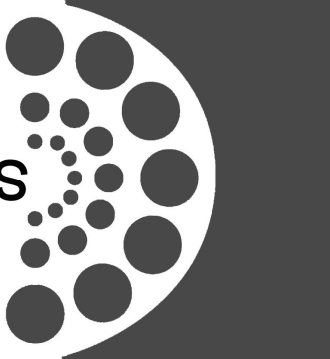
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Visit Student Services on level 2 of the library, including:

- English as a foreign language:**
Amanda Shaw - a.shaw@abertay.ac.uk.
- Advice for disabled students:**
Claire Allan - c.allan@abertay.ac.uk.



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Stage 1 - Understanding what you have been asked to do.

1. Write your coursework task here:			
2a. What sort of coursework are you being asked to write? (report, essay, review?)		2b. Do you know what this sort of coursework should look like and how to write it?	
		Yes, it is:	
		No, but I can find out by:	
3. Now you need to decide what issue to write about. Think of at least three issues, write them in the space below, and then use the tick boxes to check how easy each idea would be to write about.			
	Is it relevant?	Can you find magazine / newspaper articles about it?	Can you find at least one academic journal article about it?
Issue 1:			
Issue 2:			
Issue 3:			

Stage 2 –What else are you being asked to do?

4a. List here any other instructions and the assessment criteria you were given on the coursework task sheet.	4b. Do you know what each instruction or assessment criteria means?		
	Yes, and I can do it if I:	No, but I can find out if I:	✓
1. Use a range of sources to research the issue you have chosen.			
2.			
3.			
4. Reference properly using the Harvard system.			
5. Follow all the instructions on how your coursework should be formatted and presented.			
6.			

Stage 3 – Organising yourself.

Week:	What you aim to do:
Today:	Go through the coursework instruction sheet carefully to make sure I have discovered everything I am being asked to do.
Week 2.	Lecture on writing coursework, so bring all your coursework notes with you to the class.
Deadline:	

Stage 4 – Have you done everything you were asked to do?

Stages 1, 2 and 3 are all about preparation – finding out exactly what you are being asked to do so, planning your time and making sure you do the job to meet the deadline. The hard bit comes next – reading, having the ideas and writing it all up.

Stage 4 is all about checking that you have actually managed to do everything you were asked before you finish your coursework and hand it in. In stage 2 you listed everything you were being asked to do. As you read through your coursework before you hand it in, have the grid you filled in for Stage 2 beside you.

Can you see in your coursework where you have followed each of the instructions? Where you can find an example of when you have done this, put a tick in the final column. Once you have finished reading, make sure you have put a tick against each of the instructions. If you have missed any out, what can you do to put things right? Remember, you cannot be given marks if you haven't done the work.

